ROOKIE COACHES VOLLEYBALL GUIDE

American Coaching Effectiveness Program

in cooperation with the
United States Volleyball Association



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UNIT
4

How Do I Get My Team Ready to Play?





To coach volleyball, you must understand the basic rules, skills, and strategies of the sport. The second part of this *Rookie Coaches Volleyball Guide* provides the basic information you'll need to comprehend the sport.

But all the volleyball knowledge in the world will do you little good unless you present it effectively to your players. That's why this unit is so important. In it you will learn the steps to take in teaching sport skills, as well as practical guidelines for planning your season and individual practices.

How Do I Teach Volleyball Skills?

Many people believe that the only qualification needed to coach is to have played the sport. It's helpful to have played, but there is much more to successful coaching. And even if you haven't played volleyball, you can still

teach the skills of the game effectively using this IDEA:

I — Introduce the skill.
D — Demonstrate the skill.
E — Explain the skill.
A — Attend to players practicing the skill.

Introduce the Skill

Players, especially young and inexperienced ones, need to know what skill they are learning and why they are learning it. You should, therefore, take these three steps every time you introduce a skill to your players:

1. Get your players' attention.
2. Name the skill.
3. Explain the importance of the skill.

Get Your Players' Attention

Because youngsters are easily distracted, use some method to get their attention. Some coaches use interesting news items or stories. Others use jokes. And others simply project an enthusiasm that gets their players to listen. Whatever method you use, speak slightly above normal volume and look your players in the eye when you speak.

Also, position your players so that all of them can see and hear you. Arrange the players in two or three evenly spaced rows, facing you and not some source of distraction (a blank wall background is recommended). Then ask if everyone can see and hear you before you begin.

Name the Skill

Although you might mention other common names for the skill, decide which one you'll use and stick with it. This will help avoid confusion and enhance communication among your players. For example, choose either "bump" or "dig" as the term for the forearm passing skill, and use it consistently.

Explain the Importance of the Skill

Although the importance of a skill may be apparent to you, your players may be less able to see how the skill will help them become better volleyball players. Offer them a reason for learning the skill, and describe how the skill relates to playing the game more effectively.

Demonstrate the Skill

The demonstration step is the most important part of teaching volleyball skills to young players who may have never done anything that closely resembles the skill. They need a picture, not just words. They need to *see* how the skill is performed.

If you are unable to perform the skill correctly, have an assistant coach or someone skilled in volleyball perform the demonstration. These tips will help make your demonstrations more effective:

- Use correct form.
- Demonstrate the skill several times.
- Slow the skill down, if possible, during one or two performances so players can see every movement involved in the skill.
- Perform the skill at different angles so your players can get a full view of it.
- Demonstrate the skill from both the right and left sides.
- If necessary, break the skill down into smaller parts or learning sequences.

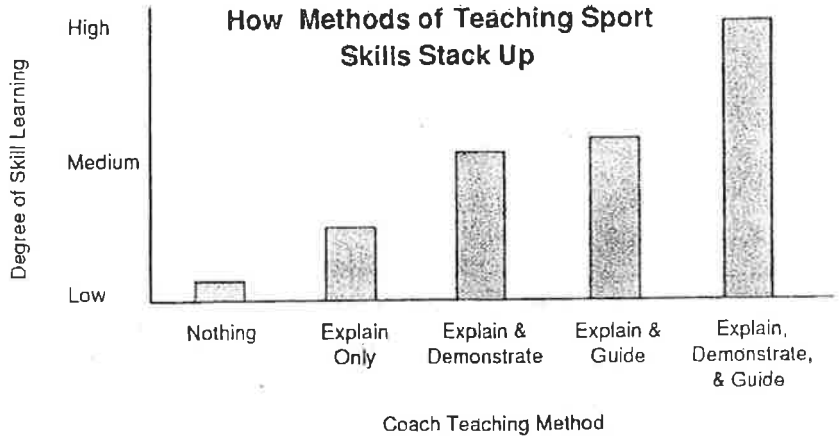
The most difficult aspect of coaching is this: Coaches must learn to let athletes learn. Sport skills should be taught so they have meaning to the child, not just meaning to the coach.

Rainer Martens, ACEP Founder

Explain the Skill

Players learn more effectively if they're given a brief explanation of the skill along with the demonstration. Use simple terms to describe the skill, and if possible, relate the skill to ones they've previously learned. Ask your players if they understand your description. If one of them looks confused, have him or her explain the skill back to you.

Complex skills often are better understood if they are explained in more manageable parts. For instance, if you want to teach your players how to serve, you might take the following steps:



1. Show a correct performance of the entire skill and explain its function in volleyball.
2. Break down the skill and point out its components.
3. Have players perform each of the component skills you have already taught them: preparation, toss, precontact movement, and contact.
4. After players have demonstrated their ability to perform the separate parts of the skill in sequence, reexplain the entire skill.
5. Have them practice the skill.

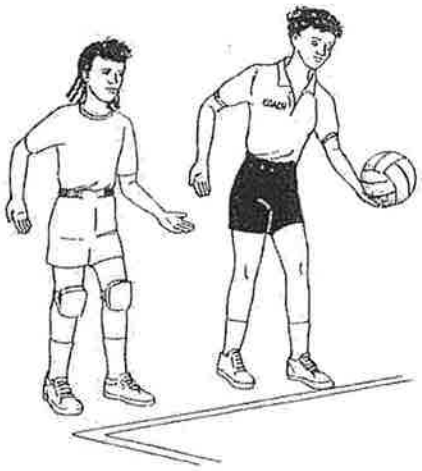
Attend to Players Practicing the Skill

If the skill you selected was within your players' capabilities and you have done an effective job of introducing, demonstrating, and explaining it, your players should be ready to attempt the skill. Some players may need to be physically guided through the movements during their first few attempts at the skill. For example, some players may need your hands-on help to toss the ball and position their shoulders and hips toward the serving area. "Walking" unsure athletes through the skill in this way will help them gain confidence to perform the skill on their own.

Your teaching duties don't end when all your athletes have demonstrated that they understand how to perform the skill. In fact, a significant part of your teaching will involve observing closely your players' hit-and-miss trial performances.

As you observe players' efforts in drills and activities, offer positive, corrective feedback in the form of the "compliment sandwich" described in Unit 3. If a player performs the skill properly, acknowledge it and offer praise. Keep in mind that your feedback will have a great influence on your players' motivation to practice and improve their performance.

Remember too that young players need individual instruction. So set aside a time before, during, or after practice to give them individual help.



What Planning Do I Need to Do?

Beginning coaches often make the mistake of showing up for the first practice with no particular plan in mind. These coaches find that their practices are unorganized, their players are frustrated and inattentive, and

the amount and quality of their skill instruction is limited. Planning is essential to successful teaching *and* coaching. And it doesn't begin on the way to practice!

Preseason Planning

Effective coaches begin planning well before the start of the season. Planning during the preseason can make the year more enjoyable, successful, and safe for you and your players if you do the following:

- Familiarize yourself with the sport organization you are involved in, especially its philosophy and goals regarding youth sport.
- Examine the availability of facilities, equipment, instructional aids, and other materials needed for practices and matches.
- Make sure you have liability insurance to cover you when one of your players is hurt (see Unit 5). If you don't have coverage, get some.
- Establish your coaching priorities regarding having fun, developing players' skills, and winning.
- Select and meet with your assistant coaches to discuss the philosophy, goals, team rules, and plans for the season.
- Register players for the team. Have them complete a player information form and obtain medical clearance forms, if required.
- Institute an injury-prevention program for your players.
- Hold a parent orientation meeting to inform parents of your background, philosophy, goals, and instructional approach. Also, give a brief overview of the league's rules and volleyball rules, terms, and strategies to familiarize parents or guardians with the sport.

You may be surprised at the number of things you should do even before the first practice. But if you address these items during the preseason, the season will be much more enjoyable and productive for you and your players.

In-Season Planning

Your choice of activities during the season should be based on whether they will help your players develop physical and mental skills, knowledge of rules and game tactics, ability to be a good sport, and love for the game. All of these goals are important, but we'll focus on the skills and tactics of volleyball to give you an idea of how to itemize your objectives.

Goal Setting

What you plan to do during the season must be reasonable for the maturity and skill level of your players. In terms of volleyball skills and tactics, you should teach young players the fundamentals and move on to more complex activities only after they have mastered these basics.

To begin the season, you might set your players' instructional goals to include the following:

My players will be able to

- use proper footwork when moving to the ball,
- assume and recover to ready position,
- serve the ball to specific areas of the court using the underhand and/or overhand serve,
- forearm pass correctly to the setter's position,
- correctly set to the hitter's position,
- attack the ball to specific areas of the court,
- execute the proper footwork and hand position for blocking an attack,
- use proper technique for digging an attacked ball,
- demonstrate knowledge of basic offensive and defensive strategies,
- demonstrate knowledge of the volleyball playing rules, and
- communicate effectively on the court with teammates.

Organizing

After you've defined the skills and tactics you want your players to learn during the season, you can plan how to teach them to your players in practices. But be flexible! If your players are having difficulty learning a skill or tactic, take some extra time until they get the hang of it—even if that means moving back your schedule. After all, if your players are unable to perform the fundamental skills, they'll never execute the more complex skills you have scheduled for them.

Still, it helps to have a plan for progressing players through skills during the season. The sample season plan in Appendix A shows how to schedule your skill and strategy instruction in an organized and progressive manner. Also, Unit 7 has an excellent teaching progression for basic skills that you will find quite helpful for even your youngest players. If this is your first coaching experience, you may follow the season plan as it is presented. If you have some previous experience, you may want to modify the schedule to better fit the needs of your team.

What Makes Up a Good Practice?

A good instructional plan makes preparing for practice much easier. Have players work on more important and less difficult goals in early season practice sessions. And make sure that players master basic skills before moving on to more advanced ones.

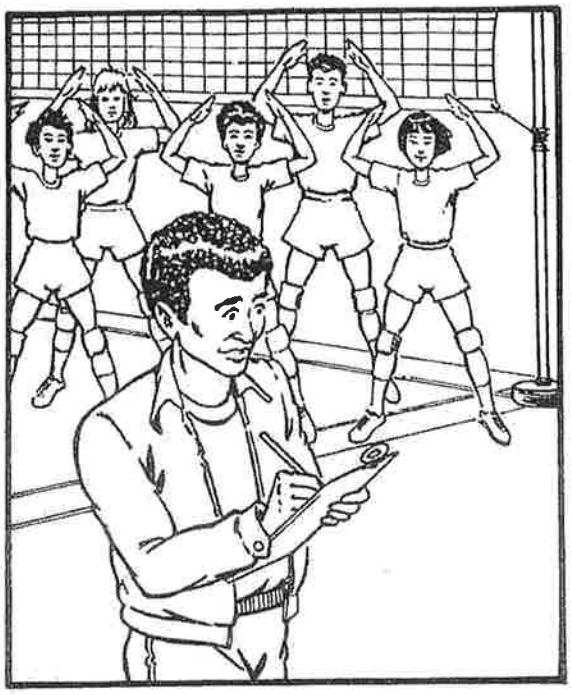
It is helpful to establish one objective for each practice, but try to include a variety of activities related to that objective. For example, although your primary objective might be to improve players' setting skills, you should have players perform several different drills designed to enhance that single skill. And, to add further variety to your practices, vary the order of the activities you schedule for players to perform.

In general, we recommend that each of your practices include the following:

- *Warm up*
- *Practice previously taught skills*
- *Teach and practice new skills*
- *Practice under gamelike conditions*
- *Cool down*
- *Evaluate*

Warm Up

As you're checking the roster and announcing the performance objectives for the practice, your players should be preparing their bodies for vigorous activity. A 5- to 10-minute period of easy-paced activities (e.g., light running, passing the ball with a partner, and jumping), stretching, and calisthenics should be sufficient for youngsters to limber up their muscles and reduce the risk of injury.



Practice Previously Taught Skills

Devote part of each practice to working on the fundamental skills your players already know. But remember, kids like variety. So organize and modify drills to keep everyone involved and interested. Praise and encourage players when you notice improvement, and offer individual assistance to those who need help.

Teach and Practice New Skills

Build on your players' existing skills by giving them something new to practice each session. The proper method for teaching sport skills is described on pages 19 to 21. Refer to those pages if you have any questions about teaching new skills or if you want to evaluate your teaching approach periodically during the season.

Practice Under Gamelike Conditions

Competition among teammates during practices prepares players for actual matches and informs young athletes about their

abilities relative to those of their peers. Youngsters also seem to have more fun in competitive activities.

You can create gamelike conditions by using competitive drills, modified games, and scrimmages (see Units 7 and 8). However, consider the following guidelines before introducing competition into your practices.

- All players should have an equal opportunity to participate.
- Match players by ability and physical maturity.
- Make sure that players can execute fundamental skills before they compete in groups.
- Emphasize performing well, not winning, in every competition.
- Give players room to make mistakes by avoiding constant evaluation of their performances.

Cool Down

Each practice should wind down with a 5- to 10-minute period of light exercise, including jogging, performance of simple skills, and some stretching. The cool-down allows athletes' bodies to return to the resting state and avoid stiffness, and affords you an opportunity to review the practice.



Evaluate

At the end of practice, spend a few minutes with your players reviewing how well the session accomplished the objectives you had set. This is an excellent opportunity to reinforce positive outcomes of the practice and keep your players focused on their improvements.

Summary Checklist

During your season, check your planning and teaching skills periodically. As you gain more coaching experience, you should be able to answer yes to each of the following questions.

When you plan, do you remember to plan for

___ preseason events like player registration, liability protection, use of facilities, and parent orientation?

___ season goals such as the development of players' physical skills, mental skills, sportsmanship, and enjoyment?

___ practice components such as warming up, practicing previously taught skills, teaching and practicing new skills, practicing under competitive conditions, cooling down, and evaluation?

When you teach volleyball skills to your players, do you

___ arrange the players so all can see and hear?

___ introduce the skill clearly and explain its importance?

___ demonstrate the skill properly several times?

___ explain the skill simply and accurately?

___ attend closely to players practicing the skill?

___ offer corrective, positive feedback or praise after observing players' attempts at the skill?

How Do I Put a Practice Together?

Simply knowing the six practice components is not enough. You must also be able to arrange those components into a logical progression and fit them into a time schedule. Now, using your instructional goals as a guide for selecting what skills to have your players work on, try to plan a volleyball practice you might conduct. The following sample plan should help you get started.

Sample Practice Plan

Performance Objective. Players will be able to pass effectively and accurately with both the forearm and overhand passes.

Component	Time	Activity or drill
Warm up	10 min	Light running Calisthenics/stretching
Practice previously taught skills	15 min	Practice tossing skills Toss and pass to self
Teach	15 min	Forearm and overhand passes to a partner
Practice	20 min	Contact forearm drill to a partner Contact overhand drill to a partner
Scrimmage	15 min	3 vs. 3 modified scrimmage (points awarded for each pass to the setter)
Cool down and evaluate	10 min	Serving Stretching

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UNIT 7

What Volleyball Skills and Drills Should I Teach?





In Unit 4 you learned how to teach skills and plan practices. This unit introduces you to the basic skills of volleyball and provides innovative drills and teaching ideas that will help you make this game come alive for your players.

Volleyball requires mobility, balance, and jumping skills. This unit will help you guide your players as they develop these skills so they can enjoy playing at any level. We'll emphasize these five primary volleyball skills:

- *Serving*
- *Forearm passing*
- *Setting*
- *Hitting*
- *Blocking*

With young, inexperienced players, you'll have your work cut out for you. Emphasize the basics to give players a solid foundation on which to build. As you'll see, many volleyball skills complement each other in the

learning process. We'll present ideas to help this learning progress smoothly and to add variety and fun to your practices. If you use these teaching tips, your players will learn the fundamentals while having a lot of fun.

How Do I Use Volleyball Drills Effectively?

Two simple coaching measures will improve the quality and effectiveness of your practices: teaching players to toss balls properly, and setting success goals for every drill. Once players can toss the ball properly, you'll have more time to coach and instruct. Helping players set goals for practices gives them something to strive for as they learn new skills.

Tossing

Tossing is an important yet often overlooked part of running effective drills. The skill looks easier than it actually is. Teaching players how to toss will take some time, so be patient. Tossing the ball with no spin makes learning and performing new skills much easier. Initially, *you* may have to do a lot of the tossing until your players are able to toss for each other. But once players learn to toss, they can run their own drills under your supervision.

With your feet shoulder-width apart, demonstrate a soft two-handed toss from below your waist to a partner who catches it just above the head. Emphasize that there is no spin on the ball and the toss is high and soft. Have each player practice this with a partner about 10 feet away. It will take a lot of practice for them to toss softly and accurately, even to a partner who is stationary.

Setting Success Goals

Having fun is near the top of most young volleyball players' list of goals. And it should be a primary goal of yours as well.

But developing players' skills should be another major goal. To achieve this, incorporate tangible measures of success in practice drills to support and monitor your athletes' improvement. Establish an objective for each drill. Every objective should be realistic for the players' ages and skill levels. As an example, you might have your players achieve one of the following goals before they rotate or move on to another drill:

Jamie must hit 7 of 10 serves into the court before rotating.

Reggie should be able to set the ball to the target three times in a row.

The first group of three that can complete the pass, set, and spike contact sequence can rotate to the next drill station.

The player who spikes the most balls into a specific area can get the first drink.

Players have more fun and improve when they have something to aim for. Give them appropriate challenges to achieve success in practices and games—regardless of the score.

Serving

Besides putting the ball in play, the serve can be an effective way for a team to score points quickly. A good server can provide the momentum to boost his or her team to victory. Only the team that is serving (except in rally scoring) can score points. The server may choose to serve underhand or overhand. In youth volleyball, the server generally learns the underhand serve first.

Underhand Serve

The underhand serve allows beginning players to put the ball in play. It is easier to control than the overhand serve because there is no toss involved. Here are some coaching points that will help you introduce the skill.

Underhand Serving Fundamentals

1. Start with the weight on the back foot and the ball held in front of the toe on the hitting side (see Figure 7.1a).
2. Hold the ball in the "shelf" (nonhitting) hand and hit the ball right out of the hand (see Figure 7.1b).
3. Keep eyes focused on the ball until contact is made with the heel of the hand. Transfer weight from the back to the front foot as the arm swings to contact the ball (see Figure 7.1c).

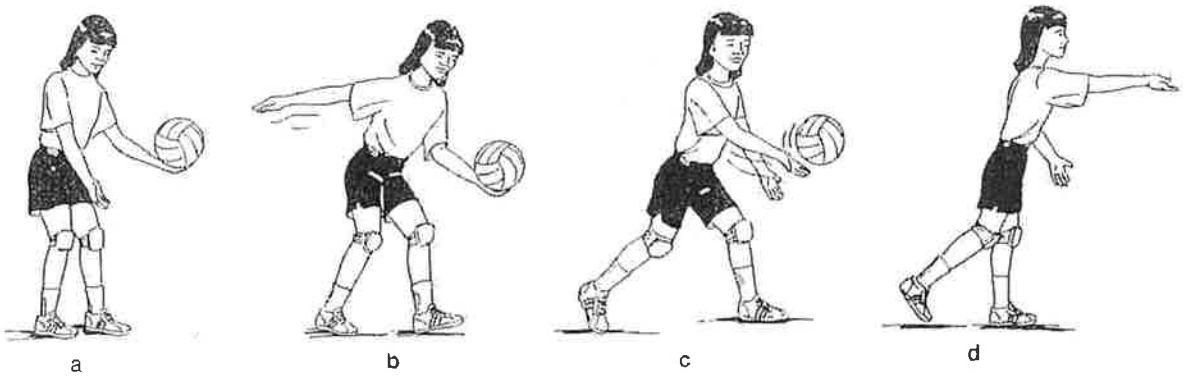


Figure 7.1 Underhand serving fundamentals: (a) weight on back foot, ball in front; (b) ball in shelf hand; (c) armswing to contact ball; and (d) the follow-through.

4. Follow through with the hitting arm toward the top of the net. The hitting arm and back leg should be in line with the follow-through (see Figure 7.1d).

Underhand Serving Drill

Name. **Underhand Serving Drill**

Purpose. To teach the mechanics of the underhand serve

Organization. Tape a line (representing the net) on a wall, approximately 6 to 8 feet high. Tape another line on the floor 15 feet from the wall and have players spread out behind it and work on the underhand serving technique. First, have them set up and shift their weight without the ball. Progress to contact and follow-through as they aim to hit the serve above the line on the wall.

Coaching Points. Remind players to hit the ball out of the shelf hand as they transfer their weight through the serve.

Overhand Serve

The overhand serve is a bit more challenging for novice players because they must be able to toss consistently. The overhand serve requires more coordination, timing, and strength, so teach it to players only after they have mastered the underhand serve.

Overhand Serving Toss

The toss is the key to a successful overhand serve. A ball tossed too high or too low will cause the server to "chase" the toss and move out of proper precontact alignment. Servers should think of the ball as an extension of the shelf hand reaching up (see Figure 7.2). Tell players to toss the ball 12 to 18 inches above the shelf hand when that arm is fully extended. The toss should always be in front of the hitting shoulder. Let players practice tossing without making contact to learn the optimal tossing height for the overhand serve.

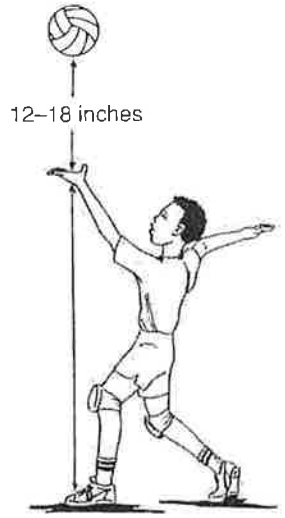


Figure 7.2 Overhand serving toss.

Overhand Serving Fundamentals

1. The front toe (opposite the hitting side) is pointed at the target area, and the weight is back on the opposite leg. The shelf hand holds the ball extended from the body at shoulder level in front of the hitting arm (see Figure 7.3a).
2. The elbow of the hitting arm is as high and as far back and away from the

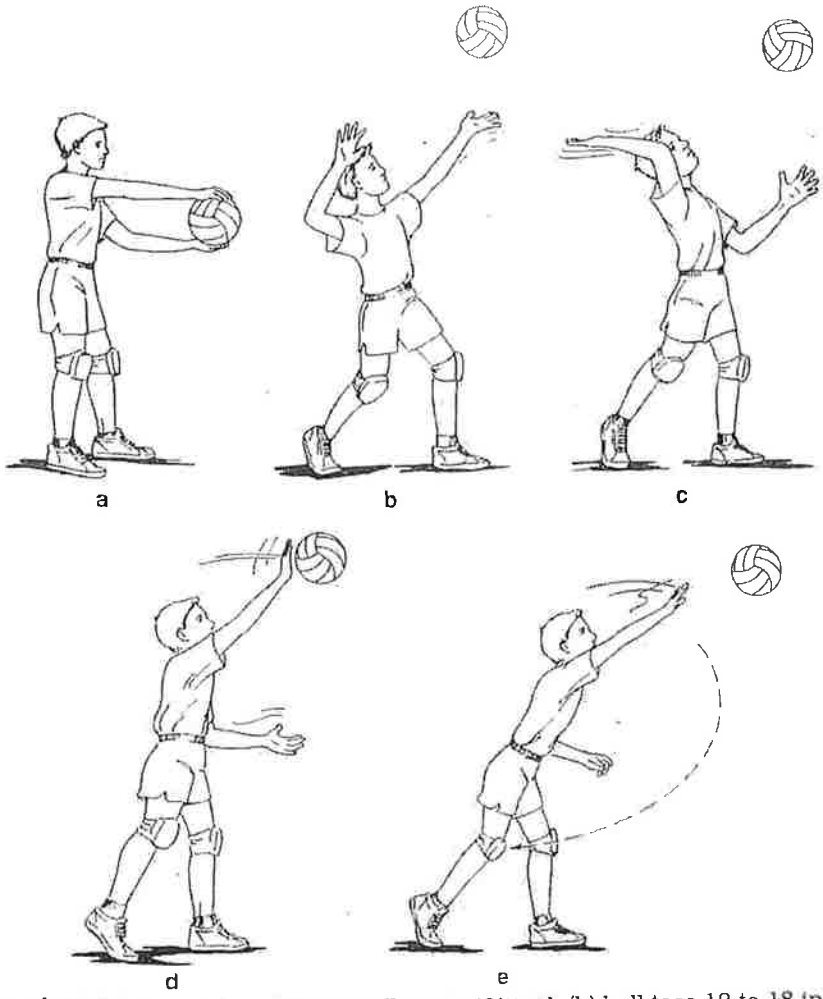


Figure 7.3 Overhand serving fundamentals: (a) ball in shelf hand, (b) ball toss 12 to 18 inches in front of hitting shoulder, (c) shoulders and hips coming through, (d) heel of hand contacting ball, and (e) follow-through, hitting arm swinging through to hitting leg.

shoulder as possible. The toss should be 12 to 18 inches above the shelf hand in front of the hitting shoulder (see Figure 7.3b).

3. Weight transfers forward as the shoulders and hips come through and the player prepares to contact the ball (see Figure 7.3c).
4. The heel of the hand should contact the ball with the arm fully extended and the wrist stiff (see Figure 7.3d). The hand should contact the ball at the 1 o'clock position.
5. On the follow-through, the hitting arm should align with the hitting-side leg. The arm does not cross in front of the body after making contact (see Figure 7.3e).

Overhand Serving Drills

Name. **Shift and Contact**

Purpose. To teach players how to shift their weight forward and contact the serve at the 1 o'clock position.

Organization. Have players throw (one-handed overhand) to a partner 10 feet away. As the players throw back and forth, they shift their weight and concentrate on preparing to release the ball at the 1 o'clock position. Next, have players toss the ball (12–18 inches) above the shelf hand to themselves. Players should shift weight forward and reach up to make contact at 1 o'clock. Finally, have players practice tossing and hitting their serves at the 1 o'clock position above the tape on the wall used in the underhand serving drill.

Error Detection and Correction for Overhand Serving

Players get frustrated when they cannot serve the ball into play consistently. Usually the toss is the problem in the overhand serve.

ERROR	CORRECTION
The toss is inconsistent, which makes for an unreliable and uncontrolled serve.	1. Check that the shelf hand is tossing the ball in front of the hitting shoulder. 2. Have players practice tossing without hitting the ball to help them concentrate on tossing the correct height (for the overhand serve, 12–18 inches from the shelf hand with arm extended). 3. Make sure the server's feet are properly positioned. 4. The server should be making contact with the heel of the hand at the 1 o'clock position.

Coaching Points. Emphasize weight transfer and contact with the ball at the 1 o'clock position. Encourage consistent tosses off the hitting shoulder.

Name. **Picking Your Spot**

Purpose. To teach players how to control and direct their serves to specific areas on the court.

Organization. On both sides of the net, players, each with a ball, line up at midcourt facing the net. The two groups take turns serving back and forth, aiming for specific target areas designated by the coach. As players achieve their goal of hitting the target area, they move 5 steps further back toward the endline. As players' skills develop, use towels or hoops on the floor for targets.

Coaching Points. Players should practice serving to the following areas on the court: short, deep, line, and cross. Your players may not be able to hit the targets, but aiming at something will help them focus and concentrate.

Forearm Passing

"*Bump* it over, Chris!" "Great *dig*, Katie!" Whether it's a last-ditch effort to save an errant pass from going out of bounds or a diving dig for an opponent's attack, the forearm pass helps make volleyball exciting. The forearm pass is used to receive serves and spikes, dig balls that are at waist height or lower, and play any ball that has gone into the net. Any hard-driven spike or serve should be received with the forearm pass. Gaining control of the ball and accurately passing it to a teammate generates the offensive attack.

Beginning players usually feel comfortable contacting the ball off their forearms. Some will complain of a "sting" as the ball hits their arms. But as their technique improves, they won't be "hitting" or swinging at the ball; they'll learn to soften and direct the pass.

Forearm Passing Ready Position

All players must be able to pass a serve or dig a spike with the forearm pass. The forearm pass begins with a good ready position. From there, players can execute the forearm pass and deliver the ball to the setter to begin the offense.

To learn the ready position for forearm passing, have your players stand with feet shoulder-width apart, toes turned slightly in, and the right foot just slightly ahead of the left. As they bend at the waist and flex the knees, their weight should shift slightly forward onto the balls of the feet. Make sure the head and shoulders are only slightly in front of the knees, and the arms are relaxed and extended in front of the body at a 45-degree angle. Have them keep the head up to follow

the ball while keeping knees bent and weight over the balls of the feet (see Figure 7.4).

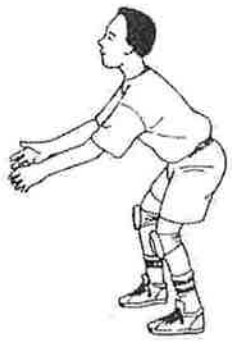


Figure 7.4 Forearm passing ready position.

Forearm Pass Hand Position

When teaching the forearm pass, show your players how to join their hands to create a solid platform. Figure 7.5 shows how the thumbs can be joined and pointed down to make the forearms form a flat platform. In all variations of the forearm pass, hand position is important to ensure a flat surface with the forearms.



Figure 7.5 Forearm pass hand position.

Platform Tilt

The platform tilt allows players to direct their passes to a target (see Figure 7.6). When unable to face the target squarely, players can "dip" the shoulders and tilt the platform (the flat surface created by the forearms) to direct the ball accurately. The platform does not change (it still remains flat), but the angle at which the ball hits and rebounds off the platform is adjusted to make the pass possible.



Figure 7.6 Platform tilt.

Forearm Passing Fundamentals

1. Begin in a balanced ready position with the arms relaxed but extended away from the body at about 45 degrees (see Figure 7.7a).
2. Join hands to form a flat surface with the forearms. The key is getting the thumbs together and pointed down to the floor to form a flat forearm platform (see Figure 7.7b).

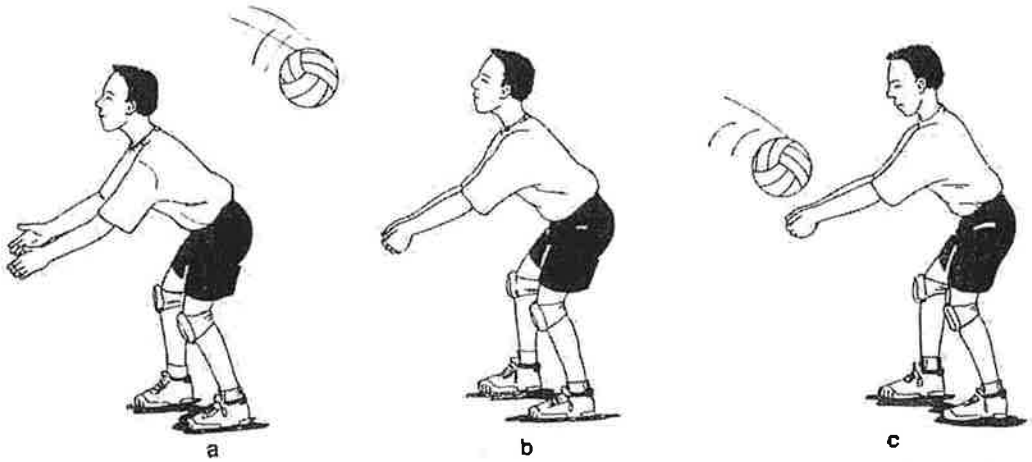


Figure 7.7 Forearm passing fundamentals: (a) arms relaxed and extended; (b) thumbs together, pointed downward; and (c) arms directing the ball to the target.

3. At contact, flex the legs. The arms follow through and direct the ball to the target (see Figure 7.7c).

Forearm Passing Drills

Name. **Triangle Passing**

Purpose. To teach players to pass at angles and use communication skills

Organization. Players form a triangle (see Figure 7.8). Player 1 tosses to Player 2, who forearm passes to Player 3. Player 3 catches the ball and tosses to Player 1, who forearm passes to Player 2. The drill continues with the tosser saying "pass," the passer saying "mine," and the catcher saying "ready."

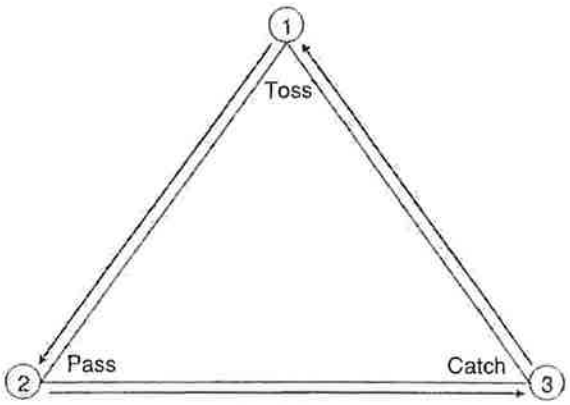


Figure 7.8 Triangle passing drill.

Coaching Points. Remind players who are passing to square their hips to the ball, not the target. They should stay low and tilt their platform to direct the ball to the target. Emphasize accuracy—meaning no catcher should have to move more than two steps.

Name. **Hit the Setter**

Purpose. To teach players to forearm pass the ball to the setter

Organization. The server (SR) tosses or serves the ball to the passer (P), who forearm passes to the setter (S). S catches the ball and carries it back to the SR position (see Figure 7.9). The whole group rotates positions after each pass, and the setter becomes the next server. All tosses or serves should be underhand.

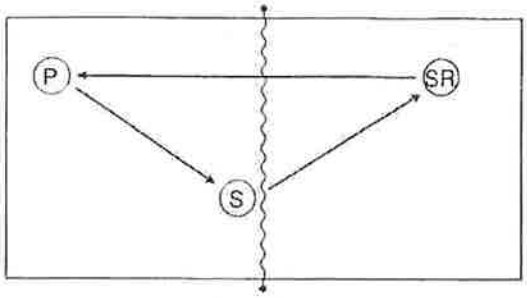
Coaching Points. Reinforce the concepts of ready position, platform, and tilt as well as communication skills. A good pass should be higher than the net and close enough to the setter that he or she can receive the ball with an overhead catch.

Variations. The setter stands inside a hula hoop. Have P1 or P2 pass so the setter can catch the ball without moving outside the hoop. Move your passers to different places on the court to help them learn how to "hit the setter" from different angles. Using four

Error Detection and Correction for Forearm Passing Technique

Young players often have a hard time judging speed and distance on a moving ball. They might overrun a ball or not even come close to making contact.

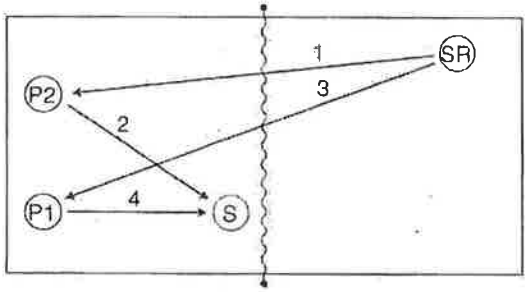
ERROR	CORRECTION
A player misjudges balls and makes contact with the hands and sometimes the upper arms instead of the forearms.	1. Watch carefully as the player contacts the ball. Emphasize moving the feet *first* to get into a balanced position before contacting the ball. 2. The ball should contact the forearms between the elbow and the wrist on the flat platform. A player can overcome misjudging the ball by tilting the forearm platform to deflect the ball toward the target. 3. Have the player establish a low position and extend the arms away from the body when contacting the ball.



SR = Server
P = Passer
S = Setter

Figure 7.9 Hit the setter drill (one passer).

players, SR tosses or serves underhand alternately to P1 and P2. P1 and P2 forearm pass to S (see Figure 7.10). The passer who is not receiving must turn and face the passer receiving the ball and stay in the ready position, ready to hustle after an errant pass.



SR = Server
P2 = Passer
P1 = Primary passer
S = Setter

Figure 7.10 Hit the setter drill (two passers).

Setting

The overhead pass, or set, is generally the second contact made in setting up an attack. It may also be used to keep the ball in play when a forearm pass or attack is not possible. The person setting is directing the attack. The setter can see the entire court from the net and determines which hitter is in the best position for an attack.

Beginning players are sometimes afraid of setting with a hard ball. Consider using softer, lighter balls initially to teach the correct hand position. This way players won't worry about getting hit by the ball and can concentrate on learning the correct technique. As soon as they have gained some confidence, begin using a regular volleyball.

Setting Ready Position

Getting players prepared to set a ball from the correct ready position is the first part of a successful set. Begin by having players stand with their feet shoulder-width apart, right foot slightly ahead of the left, facing the left side of the court. The knees are bent slightly and the weight is on the balls of the feet. In this semicrouched position, the player's hands are cupped above the forehead, waiting for the volleyball (see Figure 7.11).



Figure 7.11 Setting ready position.

Setting Hand Position

Players should cup their hands in front of the forehead and locate the ball through the "window" formed by the thumbs and forefingers. The wrists are cocked back and the fingers are spread and relaxed 4 to 8 inches from the forehead, as if holding a volleyball (see Figure 7.12).



Figure 7.12 Setting hand position.

Setting Fundamentals

1. In the setting ready position, the feet are staggered (the right slightly ahead of the left). The weight is on the balls of the feet. The hands are cupped above the forehead, locating the ball (see Figure 7.13a).
2. Contact the ball in the middle of the forehead (see Figure 7.13b).
3. The pads of the fingers, not the palm, should contact the ball (see Figure 7.13c).
4. Whenever possible, players should square their shoulders to the target. As contact is made, the setter extends the arms and legs up (see Figure 7.13d).

Setting Drills

Name. **Triangle Setting**

Purpose. To teach players the fundamentals of setting

Organization. Arrange players in triangles (as in the forearm passing drills). Player 1 tosses to Player 2, who sets the ball to Player 3. Player 3 catches the ball and tosses to Player 1, who sets to Player 2. Player 2 catches the ball, and the drill continues. The tosser should say "pass," the passer "mine," and the catcher "ready." Have the players complete five movements of the ball around the triangle, with the players who receive the ball beating the ball into position, taking not more than two steps.

Coaching Points. Emphasize good, accurate tossing in this drill. A good set is more likely with a good toss or pass.

Variations. In the same arrangement, the players start with a toss and then set continuously, reversing direction on the coach's command. With four players, each player sets, moves quickly to the next spot on the floor, reestablishes position, and prepares to set another ball (see Figure 7.14). The fourth player starts in the corner where the ball begins. As Player 1 tosses to Player 2, Player 1 follows the toss and steps into Player 2's spot as Player 2 sets to Player 3. Player 2 follows the set to Player 3, and Player 3 then sets to where Player 4 has stepped in for

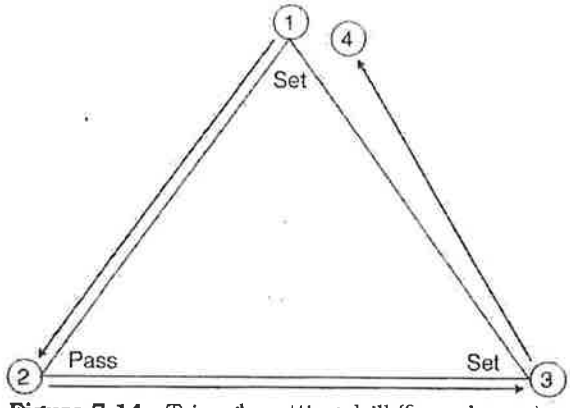


Figure 7.14 Triangle setting drill (four players).

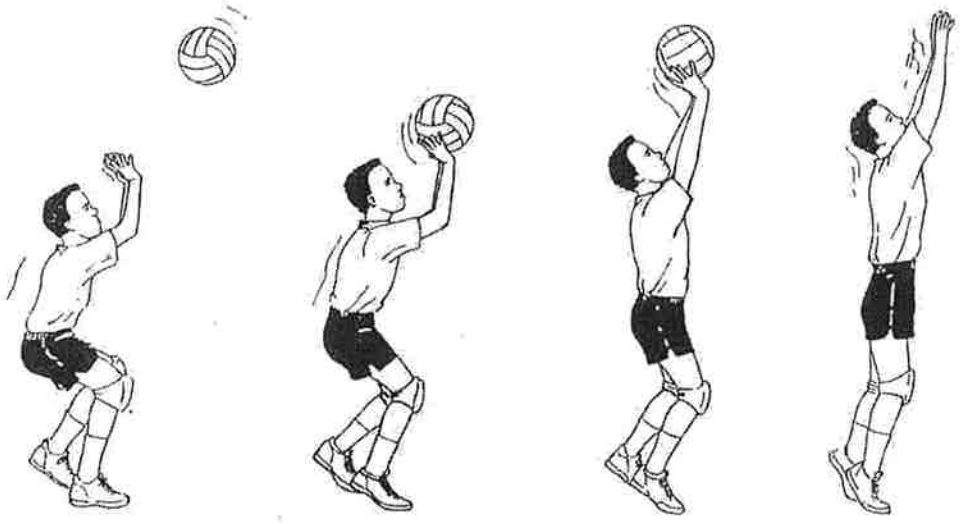


Figure 7.13 Setting fundamentals: (a) ready position, (b) ball contacted in the middle of the forehead, (c) pads of fingers contact ball, and (d) arms and legs extend at contact.

Player 1. As your players improve their skills, you may add a forearm pass to the second contact.

Name. **Free Ball Setting**

Purpose. To develop the setting skills to handle a free ball (first contact) and setting (second contact) situation

Organization. The server (SR) begins by tossing the ball over the net to the passer (P), who passes to the setter (S) (see Figure 7.15). S sets the ball parallel to the net to P, who moves up to within 3 feet of the net to catch the set and then rolls the ball back to SR.

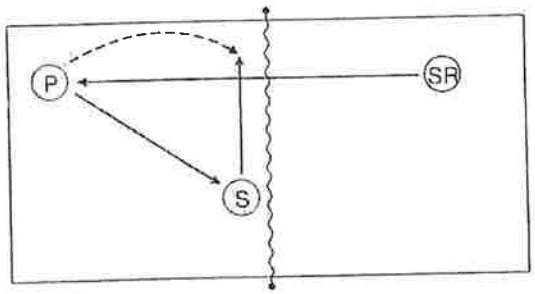


Figure 7.15 Free ball setting drill.

Coaching Points. The toss represents how a free ball, or easy, lofty return, would come back over the net. The passer and the setter work to make each other's tasks as easy as possible by using high, accurate passes and sets to each other.

Variation. Using the same setup, P forearm passes to S, and S sets the ball parallel to the net to P. Move the passer to different free ball–receiving positions, and vary the angle at which P must pass to S.

Hitting

Pass, set, *spike!* Spiking a ball is one of the most thrilling plays at all levels. Once your players have the skills to set up a teammate for an attack (spike), they will enjoy the excitement that great team play generates.

The attack is a general term used to describe how the ball is played over the net. Spiking is the primary skill used to attack the ball and is usually the third contact in the three-contact offense. A team that develops a strong attack will have opportunities to score points more readily.

Hitting Ready Position

The ready position for an attack approach is slightly different from other ready positions. The spiker must turn and run back several steps from the net to have room for an approach to hit the ball explosively. The attacker should be standing in a relaxed position with arms comfortably at the sides. He or she should be at the side of the court, about 8 to 12 feet back off the net, waiting for the set (see Figure 7.16).

Attacking Fundamentals: The Approach

1. **The most common attack approach is** a four-step pattern. Left-handed players start with the left foot; right-

Error Detection and Correction for Setting

Beginning players are sometimes afraid of injuring their fingers when setting. Using softer, lighter balls, players can learn how setting should "feel" on the hands.

ERROR	CORRECTION
Players are sometimes nervous about a hard contact so they use improper hand position when setting.	1. Begin teaching setting with lighter balls so players are not afraid of contact. 2. Review hand position fundamentals and have players toss and set back and forth to a partner to get used to the feel of the volleyball falling from above them.



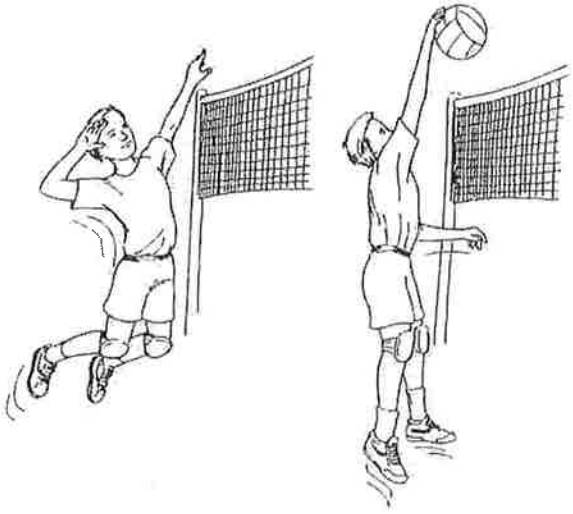
Figure 7.16 Attack ready position.

handers begin with the right foot. A player needs an explosive movement from step 2 to step 3 to set up the quick foot plant into the jump (see Figure 7.17, a-d).

2. The arms swing back as high as possible on the third step. As the fourth (closure) step begins, the arms drive forward in a full sweeping motion to help drive the player off the ground to attack the ball (see Figure 7.17, e and f).

Attacking Fundamentals: Body Position and Contact

1. In contacting the ball, think of the arm as a whip and the hand as the tip of that whip. The snap of the whip begins in the shoulder. The hitting elbow should be drawn back, high and away from the shoulder (see Figure 7.18a).
2. As contact is made, the hand should be firm and open, hitting the top half of the ball with the palm. Contact the ball at the 1 to 2 o'clock position (see Figure 7.18b).
3. Follow through sharply, with the wrist snapping to direct the ball. The arm should follow through and finish on the same side of the body (not cross over the body).
4. Remind your players that it is a penalty to touch the net with any part of the body.

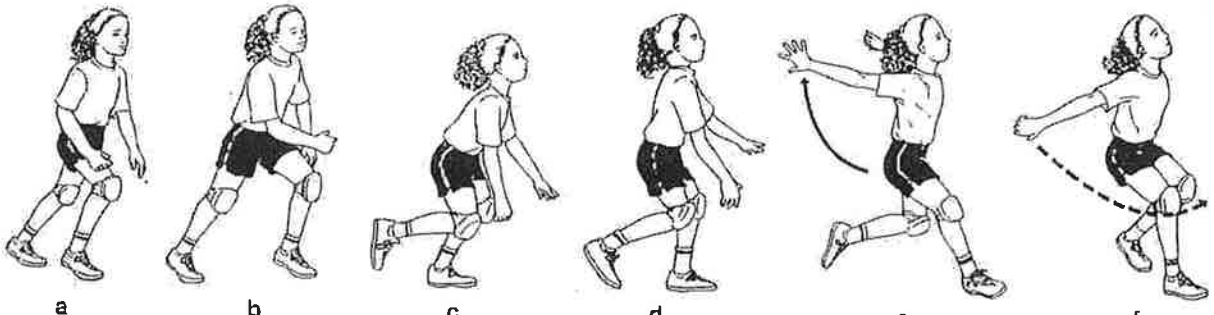


a b

Figure 7.18 Attack contact fundamentals: (a) elbow drawn back and (b) open hand contacting the ball at the 1 o'clock position.

There are different ways to attack the ball. Each can be effective in scoring points. Usually, the harder the ball is hit, the less time opponents have to dig up the attack. However, teams can use other types of attacks with great success to keep opponents off balance. The following attacks are used in various game situations:

- *Hard-driven spike:* A ball hit forcefully down into the opponent's court.



a b c d e f

Figure 7.17 Attack approach fundamentals: (a-d) four-step approach footwork; (e) arms swinging back on third step; and (f) arms coming forward, driving the player up off the ground.

- *Off-speed spike:* A controlled placement of the ball to an open space. This attack is used when a block is present and the hitter can see that an open area around or behind the block is not being defended. The attacker may take a full swing, then let up and hit the ball softly to an open area.
- *Standing spike:* An attack used from a standing position to place the ball into the opponent's court. A player who doesn't have time for an approach or jump can use the standing spike.
- *Tip:* An open-handed placement of the ball with the pads of the fingers. An attacker uses a tip when he or she sees an opportunity to place the ball in an open area and is not able to swing fully. Remind players that they may not hold, grasp, or throw the ball when tipping.

Attack Drills

Name. **Arm Swing Attack Drill**

Purpose. To help players develop the proper arm swing and contact point for spiking

Organization. Players, each with a ball, spread out along a line 15 to 20 feet from the wall. Players toss to themselves (two-handed) and extend up to spike the ball down to the floor. The ball should hit the floor, then bounce up and off the wall. When the ball bounces back, the player moves to catch the ball, and returns to retoss and hit again.

Coaching Points. Instruct players to concentrate on contacting the ball high (1 o'clock position) and following through with the wrist snap. Emphasize getting their elbows high (at shoulder height) and away from the body as they prepare to hit.

Name. **Line Pepper**

Purpose. To develop the proper arm swing and contact point for an off-speed hit from a tossed or passed ball

Organization. Three players stand in a line. The tosser in the middle has a ball (see Figure 7.19). The tosser begins by tossing a high, soft ball to Player 1, then steps aside to allow the drill to continue. Player 1 then makes a standing off-speed hit across to Player 2.

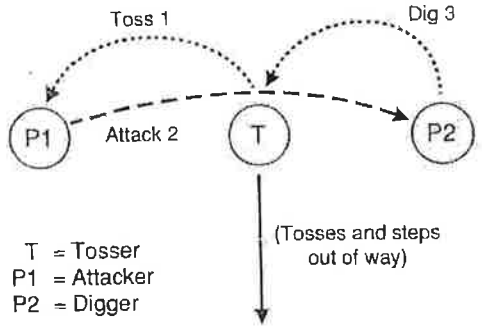


Figure 7.19 Line pepper drill.

Error Detection and Correction for Attack

Timing is critical in attacking a set. Young players often forget the approach, jump too soon or too late, and then have problems hitting accurately when they get into the air.

ERROR	CORRECTION
Players keep hitting the ball out of bounds or into the net. They seem to lack control of their bodies.	1. Players must contact the ball at the peak of the jump. 2. Check the approach and timing of the jump. Walk through the approach with your players. Remind them to watch the set so they can judge when they should be approaching to hit. 3. Have each player show you her or his arm swing from a standing position. Check that the elbow is away from the body, and the hand is making good, solid contact on the ball with the palm of the hand.

Player 2 must dig Player 1's spike and try to target the dig for the tosser, who reenters the drill to catch the dig from Player 2. Rotate.

Coaching Points. The tosser must toss the ball high enough for Player 1 to hit. Player 1's hit must be accurate enough so that Player 2 can dig the pass back to the tosser.

Name. **Two-Player Jumping Spike Drill**

Purpose. To develop players' abilities to attack the ball with an approach jump

Organization. Players form pairs; each pair should have a ball. From the setting position, one player sets (from a toss) the ball about 15 feet high and 1 to 2 feet off the net. The partner, concentrating on timing and the approach, attacks the toss and hits it in the opposite court. Each player hits 10 spikes before rotating.

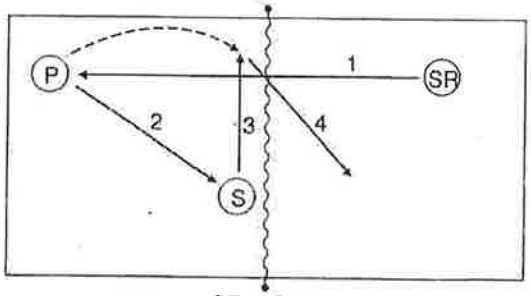
Coaching Points. Emphasize proper footwork in the approach, exploding upward, and trying to hit the ball at the peak of the jump. You can make this drill competitive by awarding a point for every hard-driven spike into the court and no points for a tip, and subtracting a point for every ball hit into the net or out of bounds.

Name. **Attack Recovery Drill**

Purpose. To help players develop timing for the approach jump and combine two skills in sequence (the pass and the spike)

Organization. Use two to four balls in each court. Server (SR) tosses or serves to passer (P). P sets balls that are high and slow or forearm passes balls that are low and fast to setter (S). S sets balls that are high and slow or forearm passes balls that are low and fast to P. P approaches the net and jumps to attack the ball into the opposite court (see Figure 7.20). P retrieves her or his own attack and moves to the serving position. SR becomes the setter and S moves to P's position.

Coaching Points. If the timing of this drill is too difficult, have the attacker perform a standing spike.



SR = Server
P = Passer/attacker
S = Setter

Figure 7.20 Attack recovery drill.

Blocking

Good blocking involves timing and the ability to read the offensive hitter's intentions. As you introduce blocking to your team, emphasize that every player, short or tall, can have an effective role as a blocker. Although taller players have an advantage, shorter players can certainly block to deflect and slow down hard-driven spikes.

The object is to block a hard-driven spike back into the opponent's court, or to deflect it high into the air on the blocker's side of the court. If the offensive team is allowed to spike without a block, it will very likely earn a point or a side out. In youth volleyball, with a smaller court and fewer players, blocking is limited to one blocker and simple footwork.

Blocking Ready Position

The ready position gets your players aligned to set a good block. Begin by teaching your players to stand facing the net with hands held shoulder-width apart at head level. The hands should be open with the fingers spread and the palms facing the net. The knees are slightly bent, and the weight is on the balls of the feet. Players will move in this coiled position, ready to spring up to block an opponent's attack (see Figure 7.21).



Figure 7.21 Blocking ready position.

Blocking Hand Position

As the blocker jumps to block, the hands should surround and smother the ball (see Figure 7.22). The blocker's fingers are spread and angled to deflect the ball toward the floor. The hands do not wave or flail at the ball. A blocker who is short, is a weak jumper, or is late jumping to block may perform a *soft* block (see Figure 7.23). The blocker's fingers are still spread, but the hands are angled backwards toward the blocker's court. The soft block merely deflects the ball back into the blocker's court to be played by teammates. The rules allow the blocker's team to make three more contacts if a soft block is deflected and playable.

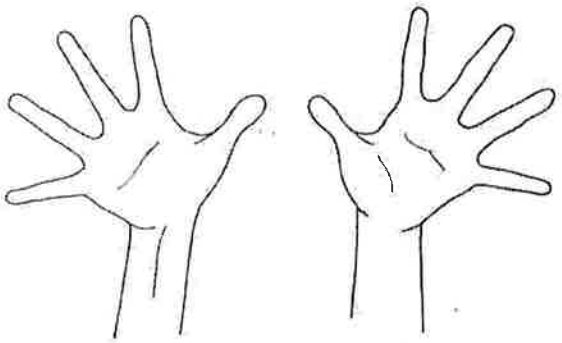


Figure 7.22 Blocking hand position.

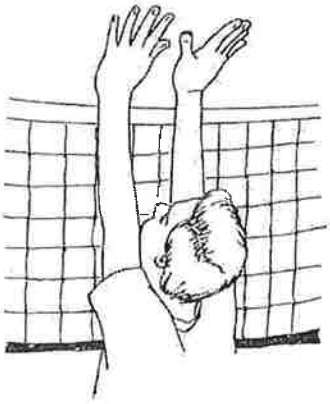


Figure 7.23 Soft blocking hand position.

Blocking Footwork

When moving along the net, a blocker uses the step-close-step footwork pattern to get into position across from the hitter. From the semicrouched blocking ready position (see Figure 7.24a), the player steps first with the leg closer to the direction in which she or he intends to move (see Figure 7.24b). Next, the player closes the feet together by pushing off the trailing foot. The feet do not cross. The player is now ready to explode up to block the attack (see Figure 7.24c). This step-close-step footwork helps players control their momentum and maintain balance when blocking.

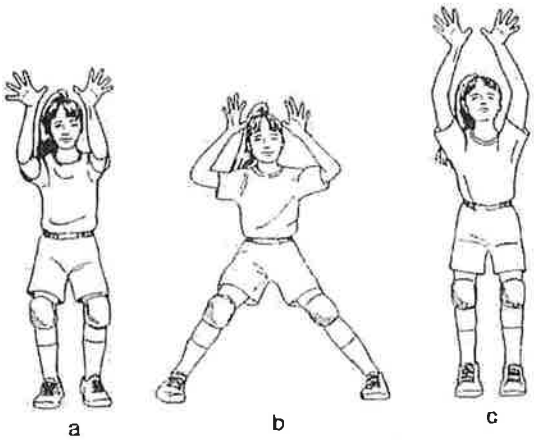


Figure 7.24 Step-close-step blocking footwork.

Blocking Fundamentals

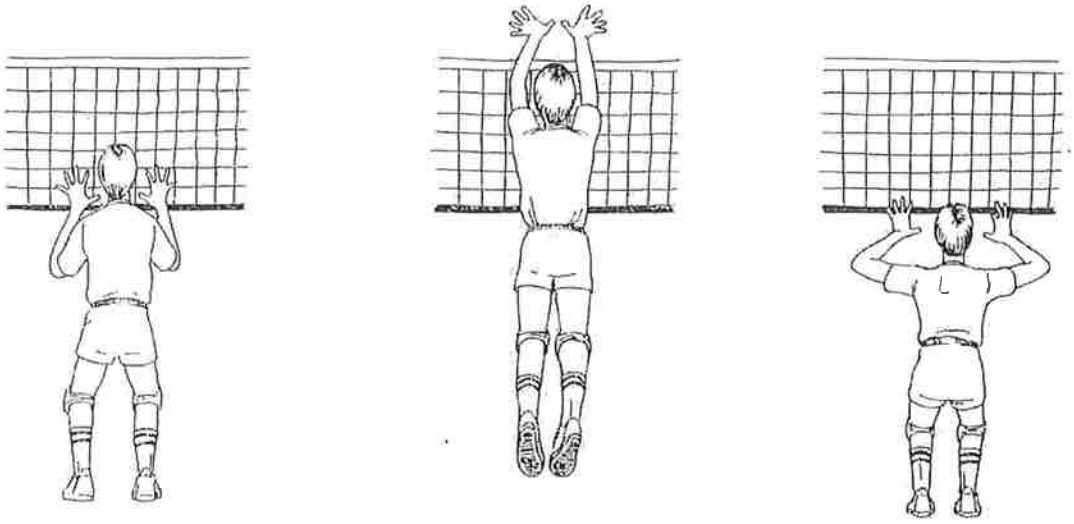
1. The blocker should face the net with legs flexed and slightly bent. Hands are open and relaxed, held in front of the shoulders at head level (see Figure 7.25a).
2. As the attacker goes up to hit, the blocker watches the hitter and explodes up from the coiled position to block the ball back into the opponent's court with both arms and hands extended (see Figure 7.25b).
3. Emphasize that players should stay out of the net and off the center line. Players should land on both feet and be ready to move in any direction after blocking (see Figure 7.25c).

Blocking Drills

Name. **Slide Drill**

Purpose. To reinforce proper lateral movement in a coiled position for blocking

Organization. Two players stand on chairs about 10 feet apart, each holding a volleyball just above net level. They hold the ball on their side of the net, facing the net and the blocker. The blocker jumps and blocks (makes contact with) the first volleyball,



a b c

Figure 7.25 Blocking fundamentals.

lands, and moves into a coiled ready position (using the step-close-step lateral footwork) to block the other volleyball being held. The player goes back and forth using the step-close-step footwork and jumps to block (contact) the balls being held by the players on the chairs.

Coaching Points. Make sure players move with their hands at head level, with their eyes on the imaginary hitter, and in a coiled position.

Variation. After the blocker lands from a block, have the players on the chairs toss a ball in a high arch to each other. Challenge the blocker to get to the spot where the ball is being tossed before it is caught.

Name. **Player vs. Coach Blocking Drill**

Purpose. To teach players what a hard-driven spike feels like when blocking

Organization. With the net lowered so players can get their hands above the net, the coach tosses to herself and spikes the ball at the outstretched blocker's hands. Players earn a point for either blocking the ball back into the coach's court or a soft block back into the blocker's court, and lose a point if the ball goes out of bounds or into the net.

Coaching Points. As players' strength and skills develop, use a higher net and have players jump to block the coach's attack.

Name. **Form Blocking Drill**

Purpose. To develop the blocker's timing with the set and the attack

Organization. Passer (P) tosses to setter (S), who sets to attacker (A) (see Figure 7.26). A approaches to spike. When S contacts the ball, blocker (B) moves to block the attack with a step-close-step footwork pattern. B moves back and forth with each toss to S. B gets 2 points for every block into the opponent's court and 1 point for every soft block back into the blocker's court. B must get 5 points before players rotate positions.

Coaching Points. You may add a server on B's side of the court to make the drill more gamelike. Make sure you don't rush your players into variations if they're struggling

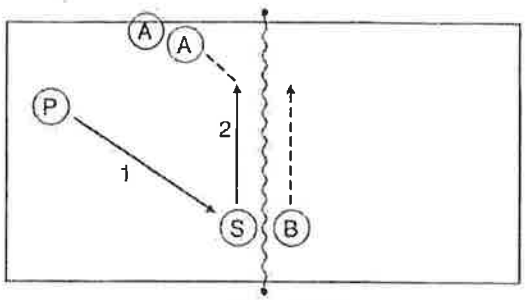


Figure 7.26 Form blocking drill.

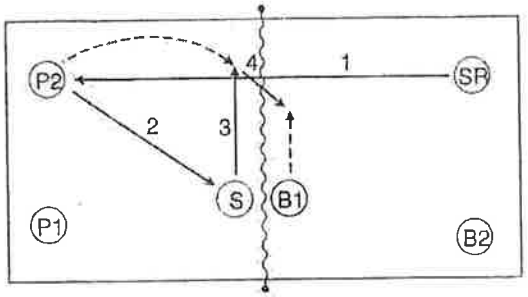
with footwork and technique. That will only frustrate them more.

Name. **Triangle Blocking Game**

Purpose. To help players develop timing for blocking the attack from various areas on the court

Organization. Two three-player teams are on opposite sides of the net (see Figure 7.27). SR serves to either P1 or P2, who passes to S. S sets to P2, who approaches and attacks the ball. B1 attempts to block the attack. The attacking team earns a point by hitting a spike into the opponent's court. The blocking team earns a point for a soft block into its own court or a block back into the opponent's court. If a ball is hit out of bounds by an attacker or is blocked into the net or out of play, the team loses a point. Play stops after each attack and block, players rotate, and teams switch serving. The game is played to 7 or more points depending on the players' abilities.

Coaching Points. A soft block is effective as long as the ball stays in play. Not all attacks can be blocked directly to the opponent's floor. A controlled soft block is better than no block at all.



SR = Server
P2 = Passer/attacker
P1 = Passer
S = Setter
B1 = Blocker
B2 = Blocker/digger

Figure 7.27 Triangle blocking game.

Error Detection and Correction for Blocking

Blockers often have a hard time keeping their hands firm and angled properly. When a blocker's hands are not properly positioned, an attacker will be able to hit balls off the block and out of play.

ERROR	CORRECTION
Hard-driven and off-speed attacks are deflecting off the blocker and out of bounds.	1. The blocker must keep her or his body parallel to the net, with hands extended over the net if possible. 2. The blocker should turn the outside hand *in* toward the court so the ball will rebound back into the attacker's court. 3. The blocker should keep the hands firm and strong, angled for a deflection to rebound directly down (unless the blocker is executing a soft block).